

Calendar

Endurance Tots

Triathlon Experience 2004

A triathlon training clinic and workout will be offered at the Carmel Valley Pool this weekend to adults — and to children as young as seven years old.

Triathlons for tykes? Talk about the hurried child. But as organizer Alison McCaffree points out, the distances for everyone are kid-sized. In fact, there is more than one standard triathlon race-distance combination, and many triathlons consist of so-called sprints.

Even the official triathlon Olympic distances — 1.5-km (.9-mile) swim, 40-km (24.8-mile) bike race, and 5-km (3.1-mile) run — aren't of Ironman

proportions, which are 3.8-km (2.4-mile) swim and 180-km (112-mile) bike race, followed by a 42-km (26.2-mile) marathon.

"Tons of people have wonderful triathlon careers and never race more than an hour or two," McCaffree claims.

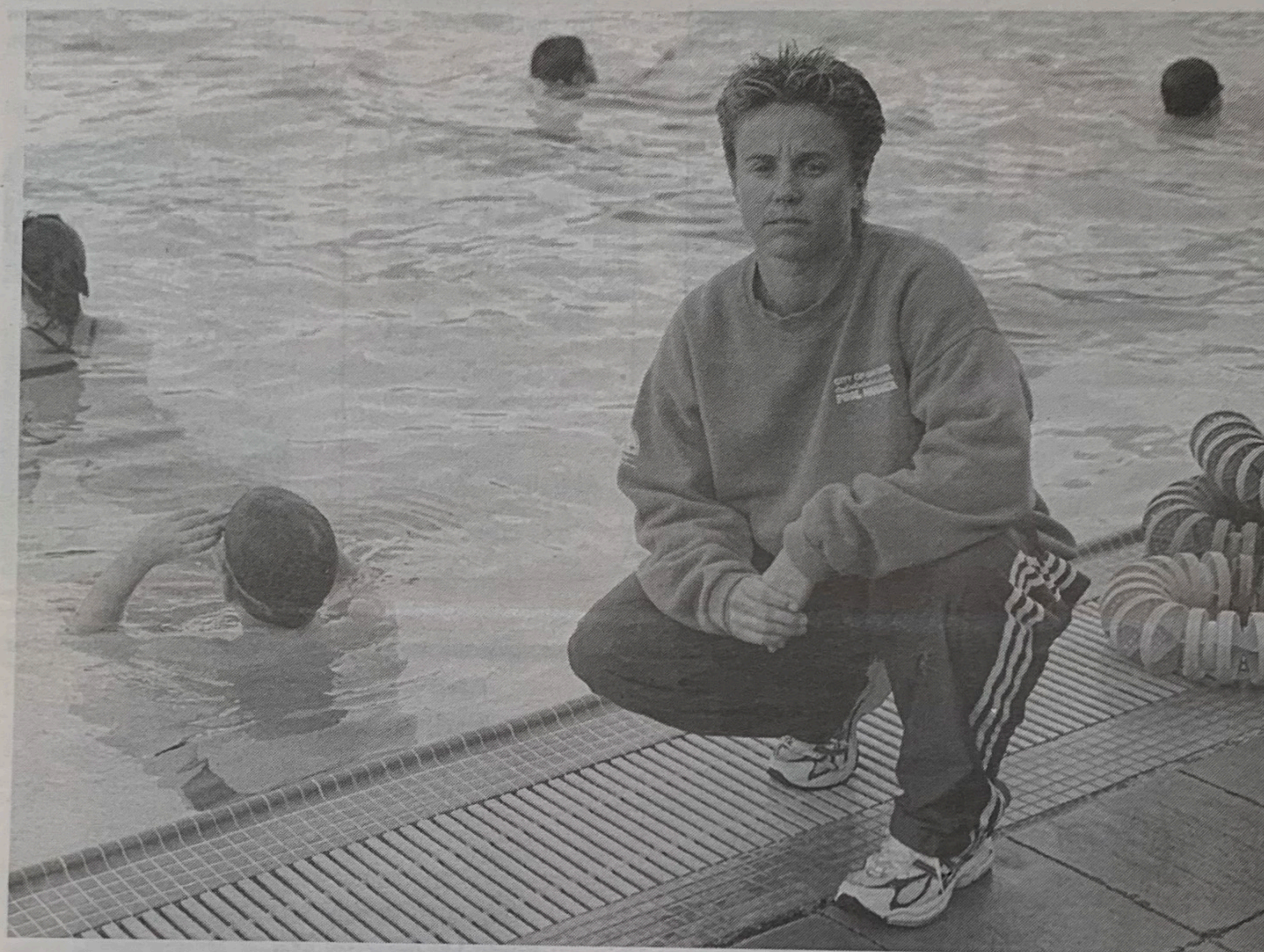
Last September, McCaffree helped out with the fourth annual triathlon sponsored by the Girl Scouts on the bay side of the Silver Strand. "It told me that a triathlon clinic for kids made sense," she says.

The scouts' distances are comparatively minuscule. For ages 9 to 12 and for families participating relay style, they are a 100-yard swim, a 1.5-mile bike ride, and a half-mile run (or walk). For ages 13 to 17 and up through single-competitor adults, those distances are doubled. (Nancy Palmer, program manager for the Girl Scouts, San Diego-Imperial Council, Inc., says, "We spell it our own way, Try-athlon, because we want the girls to 'try' new things.")

For Sunday's training the distances are more strenuous than they are for the scouts: 1000-yard swim, 8-mile bike ride, and 3-mile run. But the kids won't even be doing that much, says Erika Ferreira, who will conduct the swim portion of the program for the 16-and-under.

They'll work on freestyle mostly, "because if they're going to compete, that's what they'll be doing," Ferreira says.

Swimsuit, bike, running shoes: it's a lot for a kid to remember to bring and keep track of. Not to mention cap, goggles, socks. "Hopefully, we can make up for it if somebody forgets something or drops something. We're used to doing that, anyway," says Ferreira, who



Erika Ferreira

is the facility's pool manager.

And what about "transitioning" — getting the swimsuit off and the socks onto wet feet? "That," says Ferreira, "will be done at the next station, which is the bike group."

Ron Wild is the volunteer coach for that portion of the kids' program. A cyclist who "picked up triathlons as a sport two years ago [at age 37]," he makes it sound as if triathlon training could help a kid with "sequencing" and other skills that aren't purely athletic.

"We'll set up a mock transition station, as if they had just come out of the pool," he says. "I'll describe the process of changing into the bike equipment and getting the bike ready. We'll talk about things you need to get better at to keep the transition time down. You have to be very organized."

After that, he'll lead drills designed to help the kids compete better in large groups. "That's really the scariest part of a triathlon — getting out there with so many people," he says. "First, you're being knocked about in the water, and then you have bicycle wheels everywhere as you're coming out to do your ride. So we'll

show how you can be safe while still having fun."

It's for safety's sake that the swim comes first in a triathlon, "because," says McCaffree, a triathlete herself for four years, "if you get a cramp or something in the water, you could drown, whereas if you're running, you'll just collapse on the ground."

Whether one group of athletes is favored over others in these swim-bike-run medleys is a subject of great debate. McCaffree has found that those who are comfortable in the water do best. "Fear of swimming in open water is what prevents many people, women especially, from participating in triathlons. This training is in a pool. This is just getting people started. Get comfortable in the pool, then move on to La Jolla Shores."

A year ago, McCaffree organized a triathlon training at the same pool for women only. A member of the women's commission of USA Triathlon, she has learned that "a ton of women enter triathlons in their 40s, after having had their kids, as a way to get back into shape."

Surely there are easier ways to

firm up and lose weight. "Yes, but the cross-training aspect appeals to them, because it's not as hard on any one body part. Also it's got an adventurous side to it. And so it attracts people who are looking for something a little bit different."

Ten women participated in that first Triathlon Experience. The decision to include kids this time, McCaffree says, is an attempt to get more women to come out.

— Jeanne Schinto

The Triathlon Experience 2004
Sunday, February 8,
9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
(Children's session,
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., with
supervision provided before and
after)
Carmel Valley Pool
3777 Townsgate Drive
Carmel Valley
Cost: Adults, \$93–\$109;
Children, \$40; discounts for
families
Info: 858-720-1158 or
www.exacfit.com;
directions: 858-552-1621

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